

This is BILK # 52 for March 1993. BILK is published by Ulrich Magin, Hohenheimer Str. 60, D-W-7306 Denkendorf. Subscription is DM 15. Best way to pay is to stuff the bank notes into an envelope and mail them to me...

#### BEHEMOTH

- Nessletter 111 (published by Rip Hepple, 7 Huntshildford, St Johns Chapel, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1 RQ, UK) is full with interesting items on and around the Loch Ness monster. Issue 111 includes news on several new sightings, which, as has been the case far too often in the last years, are inconclusive.
- New Book: The publication date of my new book "Trolle, Yetis, Tatzelwürmer" will be April 20. The book will be published by C H Beck, Munich, and will be the first general study of German folklore. The book includes a large section (about 1/3 of total contents) on sightings of dragons in lakes and rivers, and a long chapter of reports of mermaids in European freshwater.
- Lake Champlain: Sheila Barrera has sent me a long report of a sighting on Champ and kindly gave the permission to quote from it. On Sept 5, 1990, a real estate appraiser and an engineer saw the creature with three humps about 1 to 2 ft out of the water for about 2 to 3 minutes. "He believes it was about 50 ft in length, the humps being 15 to 20 ft apart. She felt it was closer to 20 ft in length, each hump being about 3 to 4 ft long, 4 to 6 ft apart. She felt that it shifted from side to side a bit... They both agreed it had a dark smooth skin, which was shiny. " The witnesses ruled out a boat's wake (which is the first explanation to come into mind) and a log.

#### ISIS

- Mermaids in popular culture. Just about half an hour before typing this, I saw a TV commercial for a new model of Barbie doll - a mermaid with a fish tail and hair that changes colour when submerged! Also, starting in mid-Feb, a new poster campaign for West light cigarettes started here in Stuttgart (and most likely in other places of Germany as well) depicting a beautiful fair haired mermaid with a fish tail and bare breasts, being offered a cigarette by a normal human man. For a week, everybody here seemed to talk about "the poster with the naked woman", and I was told several newspapers had articles on people's reactions to it. The mermaid is still a potent erotic symbol.
- Strange find: I find this item ridiculous myself, but the Isis-section is on evidence for aquatic hominids in the sea, so here we go: Die Rheinpfalz, Dec 4, 1992: that, according to Reuter, a mummified penis was found on Bermagui Beach, 350 km from Sydney in Australia. The black thing had been discovered by a woman and proved to be a penis after scientific investigation.

#### LEVIATHAN

- I was reading Bruce Chatwin's What am I doing here? recently. The German edition, Was mache ich hier, Hanser Verlag, Munich 1991, on p. 57 refers to water monsters. I won't attempt to re-translate Chatwin's prose from a German translation, so I just paraphrase: Geomant Lung King Chuen explained to Chatwin that the Hongkong Harbour quarter of town was construction on dry seabed, and there are stories on sea monsters and other local demons who are annoyed at having been buried in the sand, and the geomant feared they might try to enter houses at night... These are none of Heuvelman's sea monsters, but folkloric beast which can only be understood in the context of Chinese feng shui, or geomancy. It is very likely that some medieval stories some cryptozoologist believe relate to undiscovered species might likewise be expressions of ideas we no longer share and therefore do not know. On geomancy (without references to dragons) I wrote a chapter for a German book on leys, which was said to be out in February, but I have not yet seen my copy.

#### KRAKEN

- Tall tale? Orson Welles was the type who triggered the "Martian scare" of 1938, and he made some very beautiful films. While reading a book on Hollywood, I came across a "giant octopus" story. Otto Friedrich's book "Markt der schönen Lügen" (Original title: City of Nets), published in Cologne, by Kiepenheuer & Witsch in 1988, has this to say on p.245 on a film Welles never made: "Welles had found a wonderful story in an old issue of Time. Four poor fishermen had drifted on their raft about 2000

fishermen had drifted in their raft about 2000 Miles along the Brazilian coast until they came to Rio, driven by God, as they said... Welles gave these men, who had become heroes overnight, a contract and started making plans to film their leader who called himself Jacaré the alligator, as he steered his raft into Rio at the climax of the carnival there (in 1943). While the scene was shot, the sea started to boil and a shark shot out of the water, deeply engaged in a fight with a giant octopus. The filmmaker's raft capsized, and while the majority of the crew swam to safety, Jacaré the alligator was lost in the surf. A week later, the shark was caught and opened - and in its stomach was the head of Jacaré and parts of the giant octopus. After that, Welles found himself quite unloved in Brazil..." - This sounds like a tall story to me, combined of 1920s diver's tall tales of fights with sharks and giant octopuses. However, if based on any kind of real event, we should at least have some newspaper stories. Does any of my reader's know more?

- The new movie by French director Luc Besson, called Atlantis, shows, as the Welt (Feb 4, 1993, p.9) pictures of giant octopuses. From what I have heard, these are the big octopuses from British Columbia, not a crypto-zoological beast.

#### MARINE LIFE

- Attack! A 18-year-old surfer was attacked and killed by a shark off Honolulu. The shark was said to have been 4 m in length. A special task force of the police killed 6 sharks the following day! (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 Nov 92, p. 7)
- A crocodile, called Gregory, living in the Australian Reptile Park Innisfail, bit the arm off a guard in Jan 93. (Bilm, Berlin edition, Feb 4, 1993, p.12).

#### USO

- I have often covered the strange story of alleged Soviet submarines in Swedish waters. In Nov 1992 came the disturbing news that the wrecks of several USSR nuclear powered subs lie rotting on the ocean floor, poisoning the sea. One submarine, the Komsomolets, sank in April 1989 off Norway, another one, called K 8, sank in 1970 800 km off the French coast. With this new openness between Russia and the rest of us, there might be a chance we will finally know what really happened off Sweden in the 1980s. Were there really massive Soviet intrusions, or did the Swedish see Russian subs in much the same way as they observed sea serpents before, i.e. the identified whales, wakes and shadows as a submarine threat, as I have always maintained? (Sources for submarine disasters: International Herald Tribune, Nov 25, 92, p.2; Stuttgarter Nachrichten, Nov 25, p.2; Süddeutsche Zeitung, Nov 25, p.2 and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Nov 25, p.8, Nov 26, p.1; Berliner Zeitung, Nov 26; Tagesspiegel, Nov 26, p.7; Welt, Nov 26, p. 1 & 5; Bild, Nov 26, p.2)

#### MYTHS

- I have two reports (Welt, Feb 4, p.10 & Bild Berlin, Feb 4, p.12) on a theory by geologists Edith Kristan-Tollmann and Alexander Trollmann of Vienna University who found the date the great deluge started was on Sept 23, 9545 BP, at 1500 CET. They have published a book on their findings, "Und die Sintflut gab es doch" which will be published by Droemer Knaur. Both scientist investigated flood legends and found that they are very similar all over the globe and contain "incredible details" on the historic event. The flood was triggered, they say, by a comet impact, when a comet with a diameter of several kilometers crashlanded on the earth. I have my doubts on "scientific" interpretations of myths generally, and the exact date (which echo the date Atlantis sunk, as claimed by Muck...who also believed in a meteorite impact) does not strengthen my trust. After all the talk of meteors swiping out the dinosaurs, people are very interested in reading of such catastrophes, and mixing dinosaur extinction, catastrophes, the great flood and Atlantis will well be an exiting read, but, I believe, in the same way that Berlitz is entertaining, as long as you don't take his books serious! Also on a flood, the large flood of 1717 which destroyed large parts of Eastern Friesland, a book by Manfred Jakubowski-Tiessen ("Sturmflut 1717", Oldenbourg Verlag, Nurnich) has just been published - less sensational, but scientific (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Nov 11, 92, p.13)